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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000460

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [PHUM](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: RECENT ATTACKS IN THE WEST PROVE
AREA STILL VOLATILE

Classified By: DCM VICENTE VALLE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: UN agencies are concerned by a continuing series of inter-ethnic attacks that have occurred in recent weeks in western Cote d'Ivoire, mostly around the town of Bangolo. The attacks have resulted in several deaths, injuries, and some internal population displacement. The UN reports the attacks may be linked to the start of the cocoa planting season when land disputes between the different ethnic communities are particularly high. The Head of Office for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), speculated that certain groups might be manipulating tensions in order to discredit French military (LICORNE) and UN security forces in the region. The recent violence reinforces the fact that this region of Cote d'Ivoire remains a dangerous place. End Summary.

ATTACKS IN THE WEST INCREASING

¶2. (U) UN agencies are concerned by a continuing series of inter-ethnic attacks in recent weeks occurring in western Cote d'Ivoire, mostly around the town of Bangolo. An interagency team conducted an assessment on April 23, 24, and 26 to determine the extent of the attacks and the reasons behind them. The attacks they investigated occurred along an axis stretching from the town of Beoue Zagna, south of Bangolo, and running north to the town of Baibly, all areas within the Confidence Zone. Bangolo is located north of Guiglo where anti-UN violence last January resulted in several deaths among the local population, more than \$2 million in material losses to UN agencies and NGOs, and the departure of the UN Bangladeshi Battalion from Guiglo. Information is hard to verify on the number of dead and wounded in the latest incidents, with estimates anywhere from 1-5 dead and 5-10 wounded, but the UN did confirm some internal population displacement as locals moved mainly to other villages to stay with family or friends.

¶3. (U) Local papers reported continued attacks over the weekend around Bangolo, and closer to Guiglo, that resulted in at least five dead and seven wounded and more internal population displacement. One newspaper reported the attacks were perpetrated by Burkinabe against local Guere populations while another paper reported the opposite. Papers reported again on Wednesday that attacks had resulted in four more wounded and that French military forces (LICORNE) had arrested four persons believed to have been involved in the attacks and turned them over to local police. Denis Maho Glofei, leader of the FLGO, one of the most powerful militia groups in the West, was reported as saying "if this is war, we are ready to react." Maho was the architect of the January 2006 violence in Guiglo.

MOTIVATIONS

¶4. (C) The UN points to several possible reasons for the recent violence: the start of the planting season as locals attempt to gain control over more agricultural space, continued mistrust between "locals" and "foreigners" living in close proximity to each other, and rumors of looming militia attacks against the Burkinabe that appear intended to stoke fears and heighten mistrust between local communities. One paper quoted a LICORNE spokesman as stating that recent attacks were over land tenure issues. However, Jacques Seurt, Head of Office for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Abidjan, told RefCoord that he thought some individuals are purposely manipulating tensions between the different ethnic groups in order to discredit the French and UN forces who are supposed to provide security in the Confidence Zone. Seurt pointed out there was a similar effort last year and said recent speeches made by political figures in Cote d'Ivoire only seem to encourage such activities.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Although the numbers of persons killed, injured, and displaced in the latest spate of violence remain unconfirmed, what is clear is that the area of western Cote d'Ivoire remains unpredictable and unstable, with perpetrators apparently able to carry out their attacks almost at will in the Confidence Zone. While it is true that much of the local violence in Cote d'Ivoire is over land tenure issues, disputes over property rights in Cote d'Ivoire are reinforced by ethnic differences and mistrust. These two issues, along with the question of who is an Ivoirian, lie at the heart of Cote d'Ivoire's current crisis. Seurt's assertion that certain elements in the region might want to discredit the French and UN forces in the area, much as the January attacks

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resulted in the departure of Bangladeshi troops from Guiglo, is also plausible. Whatever the causes, however, it is likely that similar incidents will continue in this region in the coming months.

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